

N.O.D - Anicca - a short commentary

(<https://nanavira.org/index.php/notes-on-dhamma/shorter-notes/anicca>),

(Summarised transcription of Dhamma talk : <https://youtu.be/E8Ova00plkl>)

Q: This is in regards to Ven. Nanavira's, shorter notes on *anicca* and the sutta quotes found there :

"In the Khandha Samyutta (iv,6 <S.iii,38>) it is said of rūpa, vedanā, saññā, sankhārā, and viññāna: uppādo paññāyati; vayo paññāyati; thitassa aññathattam paññāyati. ('Arising (appearance) is manifest; disappearance is manifest; change while standing is manifest..."

It seems at first glance, one would think that the order would be different, that it would be "arising, then changing while standing, and then ceasing". Is there a reason why it isn't in that particular order?

Nm: Because that order is rooted in a wrong view of the external point of view in regards to the experience, in regards to the fundamentals of space and time. People assume the external world, which is independent of me and my experience, and that external world possesses time in which we are placed, so to speak. So, 'time', stands for that external assumption of yourself. You think that you have arisen and you're enduring and then you're ceasing, but that requires an external reference point to see that kind of flow, which is actually impossible to see because you can't step outside of yourself. You can have that notion of a flow, or of flux in regards to external things around you, in regard to objects of your senses, but you cannot have that kind of reference point in regards to your own senses. That's why it can only be described and seen internally, phenomenologically, which is how the Buddha described it, "arising is manifest, or disappearing is manifest, or changing while standing is manifest". If you look at the nature of arising, it's like fading in, which means there is no first point before which thing wasn't and then it is, as though you can catch the moment where it appeared, that's impossible, that can only be done in an external manner. But when you're trying to apply to your own situation, and the senses, the sense bases, you cannot see it like that.

If you look at it, you see that it's either already fading in or fading out. Doesn't matter which, it is persisting while changing or changing while standing. Why? Because if you have something 'fading in', it means it's increasing in its presence, which means it's staying the same thing while it's increasing its presence. And that's just another way of saying it's 'changing while remaining the same'. If something is fading out, as in, it's de-intensifying in its presence. Again, it stays the same thing, you can still designate it as the same thing, while it's changing as in 'fading out'. So whether it's arising or disappearing, you can say that it's persisting while changing, just in a different direction.

That's why the Buddha described it in that order: *"arising is manifest, ceasing is manifest, persisting while changing is manifest"*, the three ways of looking at an arisen phenomena, either intensifying or de-intensifying, which, either way, is to see it as changing while remaining

the same.

Q: What's often heard in meditation instructions, is this idea of having to watch things constantly change, and or trying to capture nanosecond changes so that you can have an insight etc.

Nm: Yes, it's unfortunate but not surprising. The external point of view of ourselves is one of the fundamental wrong views that can be manifested. It can manifest itself in different ways but contemporarily, the most common way is the scientific outlook. As in you see yourself inhabiting this public world, that is there before you and it's going to carry on after you, But any notions of the world that you can have, it's based on your experience as a whole and your sense bases. Thus, you having a view that it's independent of "*that because of which*" that view is there in the first place, that's why it's a wrong view.

Any notion of flux requires a non-changing reference point. So, you can see things are flowing against THIS. And you can do that in regards to your sense objects. But you cannot do that in regard to your sense bases, as in, you cannot step outside of the five aggregates and your situation as a whole and then see it constantly changing or even worse, measure the nano fractions of it. That's unthinkable. But you can come up with a pleasing theory and a very neat description of it. But that would require a person to inhabit the wrong view of the external world in regards to himself and then everything will make sense. But because it's rooted in that misperception of the fundamental aspects of your situation, it cannot result in any knowledge or wisdom.

Q: He writes shortly after:

"These three sankhatassa sankhatalakkhanāni (Anguttara III,v,7 <A.i,152>), or characteristics whereby what is determined (i.e. a sankhata dhamma) may be known as such (i.e. as sankhata), concisely indicate the fundamental structure in virtue of which things are things—in virtue of which, that is to say, things are distinct, one from another. It is also in virtue of this structure that all experience, including the arahat's, is intentional (see CETANĀ) or teleological (i.e. that things are significant, that they point to other, possible, things..."

Nm: "Changing while remaining the same," requires at least two different levels of that generality, requires a certain sameness while within that, simultaneously present to that sameness, that thing is changing, until it's changed to such a degree that then abruptly you just see how it's a different thing present there, as in your experience has changed. So, that in itself is already intentional. The things on the lower level of generality, that's why he talks about the fundamental structure, are bound by that general determination of 'still being the same thing'. When that changes to a greater degree that determination ceases. And that's the basis of any intentionality. That's the basis of any choices you can make. The possibilities that are implied in the given experience as a whole, are within that experience as a whole. And in return, they actually determined that experience as a whole for how you know it.

